

Message Text

SECRET

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17

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 IO-14 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EUR-25 SAJ-01

NIC-01 AID-20 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /175 W

----- 030549

R 141125Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7712

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

USSAG

CINCPAC

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 1253

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO SAM NEUA

1. I HAD A LONG TALK WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR VDOVINE FEBRUARY 12 REGARDING HIS VISIT LAST WEEK TO HANOI AND SAM NEUA. VDOVINE STRESSED THE CONTINUING SUSPICION OF THE PATHET LAO REGARDING US INTENTIONS IN THIS AREA AND DENIED HAVING ANY KNOWLEDGE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE POLICIES OR PLANS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD EXPLAINED US POLICY IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY EARLIER TALK WITH HIM (VIENTIANE 0446) AND APPEARED IMPRESSED WITH PATHET LAO AUSTERITY AND DETERMINATION.

2. VDOVINE DISCOURSED AT SOME LENGTH ON THE LIFE STYLE OF THE PATHET LAO IN SAM NEUA. HE DESCRIBED THE PLACE AS MISTY, COLD AND DEPRESSING, ALTHOUGH SOME HOUSES ARE BEING BUILT, THE OFFICES, HOSPITAL AND MOST LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS ARE IN CAVES WHICH HAVE BEEN PANELLED.

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LIFE IN SAM NEUA IS BLEAK AND AUSTERE. ALL OF THE LEADER-

SHIP, INCLUDING PRINCE SOUPHANNOUVONG, HAVE VEGETABLE GARDENS WHICH THEY TEND DAILY.

3. IN VDOVINE'S OPINION THE LIFE THEY HAVE LED IN SAM NEUA AND THEIR REMOTENESS FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD HAVE MADE THE PATHET LAO LEADERSHIP EXTREMELY PAROCHIAL IN THEIR OUTLOOK. THE YEARS THEY HAVE SPENT IN THE WILDERNESS AND THE US BOMBING TO WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED HAVE MADE THEM PROFOUNDLY SUSPICIOUS OF THE US. VDOVINE SAID THAT HE HAD AFFIRMED TO THEM THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS PURSUING A POLICY OF SUPPORTING PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA WHICH WAS TO SEE A NEUTRAL AND INDEPENDENT LAOS CREATED. HE SAID THE PATHET LAO WERE MOST ANXIOUS TO HAVE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PROVIDED THERE WERE "NO POLITICAL STRINGS". I COMMENTED THAT I COULD NOT ENVISAGE ANY POLITICAL STRINGS ON OUR AID BUT THAT WE HAD LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS WHICH HAD TO BE MET.

4. ON THE SUBJECT OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF NVA WITHDRAWAL VDOVINE STATED THAT THIS SUBJECT HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED BY HIM IN EITHER HANOI OR SAM NEUA. HE DID NOT VENTURE ANY GUESSES.

5. ACCORDING TO VDOVINE THE PATHET LAO ARE OBSESSED WITH THE QUESTION OF THEIR PHYSICAL SECURITY AND BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF HOSTILE PROVOCATIONS IN VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG. I SAID I KNEW SOMEBODY HAD FIRED A COUPLE OF SHOTS AT ONE OF THEIR BUILDINGS HERE ON SATURDAY NIGHT BUT THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY INCIDENT WHICH HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION. VDOVINE SAID THERE HAD ALSO BEEN AN EPISODE IN WHICH A CHEMICAL PRODUCT HAD BEEN SQUIRTED IN THE FACE OF ONE OF THEIR GUARDS. I REPLIED THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE THAT MACE OR ANY SIMILAR CHEMICAL AGENT HAD BEEN BROUGHT INTO THIS COUNTRY UNDER MAP OR ANY OTHER PROGRAM BUT THAT I WOULD CHECK AND LET HIM KNOW.

6. TURNING TO RECENT STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, VDOVINE ASKED WHETHER I THOUGHT THEY WERE POLITICALLY INSPIRED.

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I REPLIED THAT IT WAS OUR VIEW THAT THE STUDENTS GRIEVANCES WERE UNDERSTANDABLE AND THAT ALTHOUGH THEY SEEMED TO BE BACKED BY NO PARTICULAR LAO GROUP RUMORS ABOUNDED THAT THEY WERE BEING MANIPULATED BY THE CIA AND THE SANANIKONES AT ONE END OF THE SPECTRUM AND THE SOCIALIST POWERS AT THE OTHER. VDOVINE CONCURRED AND SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD ALL THE SAME RUMORS BUT HE SHARED MY VIEW THAT THE STUDENT MOVEMENT WAS

SPROUTING INDEPENDENTLY ON WHAT WAS
ADMITTEDLY FERTILE SOIL.

7. I REPEATED TO VDOVINE AS I HAVE BEFORE OUR DESIRE
TO WORK OPENLY AND SINCERELY IN SUPPORT OF THE PRIME
MINISTER'S OBJECTIVES. WE PARTED WITH MUTUAL EXPRESSIONS
OF THE DESIRABILITY OF OUR STAYING IN CLOSE TOUCH DURING
THIS PERIOD IN WHICH SOME UNEXPECTED ACTION MIGHT
UPSET THE APPLE CART.
WHITEHOUSE

SECRET

NNN

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